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Address by
Mikhail Gorbachev
to the
Congress of People's
Deputies

May 30, 1989

SOVIET
REVIEW
DOCUMENTS

SCANNED

12/09/19

C-82453

**Address by
Mikhail Gorbachev, the General Secretary
of the CPSU Central Committee and the
President of the USSR Supreme Soviet,
to the Congress of People's Deputies**

***Following is the full text of the address by
Mikhail Gorbachev to the Congress of People's
Deputies on May 30, 1989, that dealt with the
guidelines for Soviet home and foreign policies***

Esteemed Comrade Deputies,

It was declared from this rostrum more than once in the past that what was happening in this Kremlin Hall had riveted universal attention. Let us not count how many times this was true and how many times this was wishful thinking. But today we have every right to say, guided by what we know, that the attention of all Soviet people and the entire world public is fixed on this Congress.

Events taking place in the Kremlin these days signify that the political history of the Soviet Union is entering a new, democratic phase, although in a tormenting struggle, with difficulties and complications. In clashes and sharp collisions a new Soviet Parliament is being born and a new system of state machinery forged to involve all citizens in practice in the hard work of self-government. This is an opinion of our Czechoslovak friends, as expressed in the *Rude Pravo* newspaper.

Our Congress is in its fifth day. For all this time this hall has witnessed the simmering of passions. I think that we all agree that the work of the Congress is riding the wave of democratic renewal and deep-going revolutionary processes in society.

There is hardly any need now to prove that the Congress itself, everything that preceded it and the character of the debates that have been started signify a convincing victory for perestroika and open a new page in our state's history.

Comprehending the truth by all and everyone is no easy process, but, Comrade Deputies, it is necessary. It is quite natural, therefore, that a frank examination of all our undertakings and an impartial analysis of the causes of the existing situation and the course of current changes rid society of the letters of apathy and indifference, incite the fermenting of minds and a clash of views and proposals.

Despite the diversity of opinions voiced here, the debate at the Congress has been consonant with the fundamental ideas put forward by the Communist Party after April 1985, especially at its 19th Conference and in its election platform. I state this with enormous satisfaction as I see this as manifesting important popular support for the perestroika policy.

Our Congress clearly reflected on the very first days of its work the complex and contradictory processes taking place in the country. This could not have been otherwise.

By the beginning of the 1980s, as a result of many years of stagnation, the country found itself in a serious crisis that had embraced all spheres of life. The situation demanded that the Party make a sharp turn. That was a crucial choice, and the Party made it.

Today, we all see the correctness of that choice. The wave of renewal has woken the country. The process of mastering new forms of public life, in economy, politics and culture, has become established.

The Congress has demonstrated once again profound understanding of the fact that perestroika is our destiny, a chance given to us by history. It cannot and should not be wasted. Despite the diversity and opposition of views, there has emerged a kind of nationwide consensus that there is no alternative to the political course towards the drastic renewal of socialism.

This is correct. But today the country is expecting from the Congress an honest analysis of the way perestroika is being carried out. What it has brought forth, where and why it has not justified expectations, where and what difficulties and problems have emerged. What is particularly important is that people are waiting for concrete decisions that would ensure onward movement.

Hence the importance of the discussion started at the Congress, which set the tone for its free and unrestrained work. The decisions we are to make are far from easy and we have all to bear responsibility for them before the Soviet people. But I am sure that our Congress will display balance and statesmanship in assessing the situation and determining practical measures. Of course, one should not expect instant changes in all spheres of our life. It is necessary to concentrate all efforts without delay on resolving outstanding problems within the shortest possible time. This is, as I see it, one of the main tasks of the Congress, of the Supreme Soviet and the new government.

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Profound changes in the economic and social spheres are the basis of perestroika and a decisive factor of attaining its goals. The essence of all work in this field is to turn the economy towards man and create working and living conditions for Soviet people that match modern standards. I mean primarily such issues as food, housing, services, health protection, environmental protection, improvement of education, science and culture.

We should examine together the existing situation and assess it from honest, realistic and exacting positions. It is important to see the entire picture as it is in order to consolidate and impart great dynamism and stability to everything positive that has been accomplished and, at the same time, resolutely discard everything that was caused by miscalculations in policy and practical activity, both in the centre and at the periphery.

I think that we can now speak of the start of the process of reorienting the economy towards the people's social needs. The mean yearly volume of housing construction grew by 15 per cent in the past three years against the previous five-year period. This means that the Soviet people received about 900,000 new flats. Last year, 19 billion roubles worth of credits, six times more than in 1985, were set aside for the construction of individual houses. Housing construction is growing.

Six billion roubles of additional allocations were obtained despite complicated economic conditions to boost the health service, and more than six billion were allocated for education. Salaries of teachers were increased, salaries of physicians and other medical workers are being increased. As a result of these measures, the number of polyclinics built on average each year in the current five-year-period against the previous five-year-period went up by 39 per cent, of schools by 37 per cent, of child-care centres by 14 per cent, of hospitals by 20 per cent, and of community centres by 54 per cent. The number of nursing homes for the aged and disabled already equals that built during the entire previous five-year-period.

For the first time in our economic history, consumer goods production has been ahead, for the second year, of the development of industry on the whole. The services sector is expanding at a rate twice as fast as in previous years—at a 15 per cent annual rate. More than five million

families received land plots for gardens and collective kitchen gardens in the past three years

The problem of enhancing worker productivity by intensifying scientific and technical progress confronted us in the first years of perestroika. It is only on this basis that it is possible to build realistic plans to develop the economy and improve living standards.

Despite difficulties with resources, practically twice as much capital investments were allocated to develop priority areas of machine-making and electronics in the 12th five-year-period compared to the previous five years. It had to be done as we have fallen far behind in this respect.

Emphasis in our investment policy is placed on the solution of social issues. But we also seek not to waste time and strive for accomplishments connected with the scientific and technical enhancement of the national economy so that in the future we could possess resources to improve living standards.

So far we have not felt the real effects of these steps. Many People's Deputies raise the subject of the shortage of high technology and modern equipment, which is holding back the modernisation of the economy.

But the rates of technological renewal have begun to grow. The growth of worker productivity has been intensified, and a reduction of people engaged in the sphere of material production has started. This is taking place for the first time in the Soviet economy.

Why do I say all this? As you understand, not in order to gloss over our state of affairs and portray it in a rosy light. This would not be serious, bearing in mind who is sitting in this hall and the millions of people who are closely watching the work of our Congress.

My prime objective is that our Congress should

acknowledge that work collectives, at this complicated time when we are changing all forms of our life, are working hard to change things for the better

This is also necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the current processes, to identify painful points that have emerged in the path of positive trends and processes

What is the matter? why do not we yet feel even the effects of what has been achieved? First of all, because the country's financial system was seriously distorted, and the consumer market unbalanced. Any kind of shortage of consumer items gives rise to strong and legitimate discontent among people and adds to the social strain in society

The causes are various. These negative phenomena are the hard legacy of the past and the tremendous losses connected with the fall in world prices of fuel and raw materials, the Chernobyl accident, and natural calamities. At the same time the economic situation is connected to a considerable extent with our own actions and sometimes inaction even during the years of perestroika

To begin with, the state continues to live beyond its means. Budget expenditures in the current Five-Year-Plan period are growing faster than national income. Hence, the growing budget deficit. This is simply inadmissible from the economic point of view and should not be regarded other than as a serious miscalculation in economic policy, for which responsibility is borne primarily by the USSR Ministry of Finance and its apparatus

The scope of unfinished operations in capital construction has considerably increased—by 30 billion roubles—rather than decreased, as was envisaged by the decisions of the 27th Congress. Both the USSR State Planning Committee and the State Building Committee yielded to the pressure of departments and local bodies while the government did not show due exactingness

Such a fundamental element of economic reform as the establishment of a mechanism to regulate and coordinate the end results of labour with the labour remuneration fund, without which it is impossible to make headway in the economic field, has not been solved either. Expenditure for wages is growing much faster than labour productivity.

We all are in favour of securing good pay and the growth of earnings. But this should clearly be geared to real end results. Otherwise, there will be much money and few goods. The situation is difficult.

In general, Comrades, it is essential to get down without delay to the elaboration of an economic mechanism which would resolve this problem. The first steps and proposals have been made. I expect an in-depth and competent discussion of these problems at this Congress.

An analysis of the causes of the current situation would be incomplete without pointing out that our losses caused by mismanagement and low labour discipline are still great. Of course all this is also connected with the mastering of a new mechanism. But this is being done differently: some people took up cost-accounting relations in earnest, which already yields results, while others continue to live according to the old ways and are simply marking time. Questions about the responsibility of cadres at all levels, their competence and conformity with the demands of the times are arising.

All our drawbacks, lapses and troubles are epitomised by one main problem—the market imbalance—which reduces to nought the positive changes, albeit small ones so far, that have already become visible in the economy and the social sphere. This issue has acquired a political character.

It is essential to stop the growth of negative phenomena

and first of all to normalise the market situation This is the most urgent task

The main thing in this respect is to rapidly increase the production of goods and the amount of services to ensure the priority growth of commodity stocks as compared with the money incomes

There is also another point of view It is proposed to solve this problem by putting the market economy mechanism into full gear in the hope that this mechanism will put things right

We do not share such an approach The proposed measure would aggravate the social situation and disrupt all processes in the country

A task has been set for this year to increase the production of goods by 37 billion roubles According to estimates made by scientists and specialists, it is essential to bring the increment up to 55-60 billion roubles in order to improve the situation considerably as early as next year

A large amount of work has already been launched in sectors and republics in keeping with that This will require tremendous and, I would say, extraordinary efforts by both central and local authorities and work collectives

But the work on this problem shows that we have real possibilities for that

The capacities of not only the light and food industries and agriculture but also of all sectors of our economy, including the heavy industry and defence plants, should be put to use In short, all production capacities which can now be converted to the output of consumer goods in demand should be utilised

Many proposals are made at local level on how to tap the available resources and saturate the market with goods A newly-elected government with the participation of the

republics should complete this work, work out a specific action plan and submit it to the Supreme Soviet

As to the shortage of staple goods, I think the government should give a specific answer to this question at the Congress

And of course, the most resolute measures should be taken to normalise finances and to stabilise the country's money circulation. In this respect one cannot do without adjustments in all economic activities of the country or without elaborating an austerity budget. It is clear that the Congress could give a special assignment to the government as regards this matter.

Finally, one should not ignore the import resources for the development of the light and food industries and for the replenishment of the market with consumer goods, specifying the terms which have already been mentioned more than once.

It is necessary to single out the implementation of the decisions of the Central Committee's March Plenary Meeting on agrarian policy and the food problem as a task of paramount importance because this is an urgent matter requiring common efforts and because the reorganisation of economic relationships in the countryside and the transition to new management conditions are proceeding with great difficulty, encounter lack of understanding and quite often meet direct resistance.

Let us discuss once again this matter with due regard for the political guidelines set by the March Plenary Meeting and the requirements of life. We all have arrived at the conclusion that matters will not move forward and the food programme will not be implemented without a radical reorganisation of economic relationships in the countryside. Whatever resources we use would not produce the desired effect if this fundamental issue is not solved.

But if we agree with that—and we reached agreement on the eve of the Plenary Meeting, at the Plenary Meeting and in its decisions—what is then the matter? During the Congress I have several times talked to Deputies working in the agrarian sector. A rather interesting and contradictory picture emerges when I speak to leaders and specialists of collective farms and state farms, they say that it is necessary to increase machinery and capital investments, and accelerate the social development of the countryside.

This is the right thing. We all spoke of that at the March Plenary Meeting as well. It is essential to do everything possible concerning the social development of the countryside and to create normal living conditions for the rural workers—and without delay.

But I felt that some Comrades are not very keen on changing over to new forms of management—the creation of “cooperatives of cooperatives”, lease arrangements, and peasants’ farmsteads. One of them even told me “Who suggested this idea of lease arrangements to you?”

Speaking to lease-holders, who are also present here, it is clear that they are of a different opinion. They are for restructuring economic relations in the countryside and support with interest the decisions passed on this score by the March Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee. But they say that new forms of economic management are held back and run up against all sorts of bureaucratic obstacles in spite of these decisions, in spite of the decree on lease-holding and the corresponding government decisions.

The lease-holders say that local bodies continue to command the collective and state farms, while the heads of these farms, in turn, refuse to abandon these selfsame command methods vis-a-vis farmers and state-farm workers. Many of them prefer to run their business in the

old style. They hamper the development of cost-accounting relations in the countryside, referring to the unwillingness of peasants to lease land and means of production. I heard the same when speaking with managers.

Different interests are apparently coming into contradiction here. We must, Comrades, exchange views on this score, discuss frankly what should be done to prevent these important Plenum decisions from remaining poised in the air, and, what is most important, improve food supply situation.

After all, the essence of the political guidelines and decisions of the March Central Committee Plenary Meeting is to return the farmer to the land by means of new forms of economic management, to provide him with means of production, to make him master of the land and thereby to encourage his personal interest, to boost material incentives to increase farm output.

Along with it, I should like to stress the need for getting down first and foremost to the social development of the countryside, to promote rural trade, housing construction, communal services, to develop the entire infrastructure, especially roads. Rural dwellers in all regions are raising vigorously the question of gas supplies. Possessing as we do huge potentialities of this domain, we have no right to dodge solution of these problems.

People's Deputies of the USSR, representing the agrarian sector, say that the ministries and departments, turning out machinery and fertilisers for the countryside, are very slow in restructuring. We must look into this matter. On the one hand, the country produces large amounts of machinery, while on the other hand, there is a hue and cry everywhere about their shortage. This means that we are manufacturing the wrong machinery. Let's, at long last, make the necessary corrections in our programmes so as to ensure within the next few years the output of machine

systems needed at collective, state and lease-contract farms, as well as at individual small holdings in all the regions of our country And, which is also important, their prices should be reasonable Representatives of the agrarian sector say that machine-builders boosted prices of all the farm machinery, although its quality and its production capacity show little improvement

It is also necessary to discuss other priorities of social policy in the coming period The question of raising the living standards of the insufficiently provided for sections of the population—pensioners, families with many children, orphans and invalids—should be ranked among the priority tasks

This problem is of great socio-political importance in present-day conditions After all, we are dealing here with more than 40 million low-income people No matter how difficult it is to solve this problem in the light of the current grave financial conditions, this must be done and as quickly as possible Among the most important measures in this direction is the adoption of a new pensions law, which is being drafted by the government

It will be submitted for the consideration of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and put to nation-wide discussion I believe that such an important law should then be adopted by the Congress

The quality of medical services concerns all A nation's health is the most important precondition of its success in all domains Let us not stunt efforts, Comrades, to set up a network of hospitals and polyclinics throughout the country, to fit them out with modern equipment, to solve once and for all the problem of supplying medicines for the population.

Despite all the existing difficulties, we find and, I hope, will continue finding funds for this purpose But most unsatisfactory so far is the extent to which these funds are

being used up, although we are just beginning the work for creating a modern basis for the public health service in this country. This is the fault of builders and, I believe, of local government bodies.

And one other point. Financial and material resources are being accumulated at enterprises and local administrative bodies in conditions of the ongoing radical economic reform. In my opinion, labour collectives could pool their efforts to expand the basis of public medical services.

All these problems must be placed under the rigorous control of People's Deputies.

To ensure a healthy life special attention must be given to the protection of the environment or, as we are accustomed to say, to ecological safety. The situation is alarming here to say the least. The quantity of harmful substances in the atmosphere exceeds permissible levels in a hundred or even more towns of the country. A difficult situation has formed with the protection of water resources, rivers, forests, with the use of mineral resources. The problem of the preservation of lands even irrigated ones, is acute everywhere. We must take action without delay.

We must proceed in two directions here. Firstly, we must have a clear-cut programme to solve already accumulated problems.

This refers to industry, agriculture, water conservancy, forestry, in other words to the entire habitat. I think the drafting of a national programme on this issue is being delayed. We at the Congress should put forward quite definite demands to those who must accelerate this work.

Also, it is important to make full use of the funds allocated for this purpose. We say that quite a few problems have piled up and that they should be tackled.

without delay, as should the problems of housing, food and goods

This is right, if we do not deal with the habitat now, we're going to have troubles. They are already at our door. But look, the resources allocated on environmental protection are not enough, although they are increased every year. Besides, less than 50 per cent of these resources are being used so far.

Therefore, Comrades, let us raise these problems not merely for the sake of criticism, let's get down to concrete work, to their practical solution. We should display more efficiency and responsibility.

And, now the second, no less important direction. We must ensure the ecological safety of all projects and scientific-technological decisions. Their ecological cleanliness must be checked scrupulously for this purpose.

Instead, we continue pushing projects that are unfit from the viewpoint of environmental safety, to make the construction cheaper.

I talked with a Deputy from Komsomlsk-on-Amur which I had once visited. Local people complained that furniture had to be delivered to them from the centre. Then Minister Comrade Belousov said that there were possibilities for producing 20 million roubles' worth of furniture there. Okay. People bought equipment abroad, save environmental protection facilities.

Who needs such saving? There are already rallies in Komsomolsk-on-Amur on this issue. So, I'll repeat, the ecological cleanliness of all projects must be scrupulously checked.

As you know, questions of building several canals, atomic power plants, chemical enterprises have been discussed keenly during the election campaign from the

point of view of ecological safety The Congress Presidium has also received notes raising these issues

It is obvious that the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and its corresponding commissions must discuss without delay these questions most thoroughly and resolve them Nevertheless, it is necessary to take into account both the ecological requirements and the interests of further economic development, without which it is impossible to satisfy the people's vital needs

In connection with the discussion of social problems I wish to express my conviction that this Congress will reaffirm the political orientation of the 27th Party Congress to solve the housing problem, to provide every family with a separate flat or house by the year 2000 This task is far from easy but it must be solved

There are good reasons for putting the issue this way, and I became convinced of it even more when I met working people in all regions of the country The first thing they spoke about during those meetings was the housing problem, rather than the problem of food or goods

Taking into account the urgency of this problem for millions of people in town and countryside, we must, apparently, reassess the mapped out plans and find new possibilities for expanding the scope of housing construction

We have issued instructions to study the situation and determine what must be done to ensure the solution of this problem without fail so as not to prove insolvent after having made such a commitment to our people I wish to recall that 550 million square metres of housing were built in our country during the 11th Five-Year-Plan period For the 12th Five-Year-Plan period the task was set of raising this figure to 650 million square metres We shall fulfil this task, it is clear already For the 13th Five-Year-Plan period we outlined the task to bring the volume of housing

construction to 820 million square metres. Now, apparently, we must plan 900 million square metres and one billion square metres for the 14th Five-Year-Plan period. Then we shall be able to regard this target as realistic.

Of course, this involves the use of all the available reserves, all the potentialities of enterprises, of individual and cooperative housing construction. There is no shortage of initiative. The people want to build homes. But this is hampered today by a shortage of building materials, sanitary equipment, everything that is necessary to make the housing comfortable. Hence the incoming complaints. The problem does not boil down merely to measures that should be taken at the centre, although they must be reflected in our plans without fail. Concerted efforts and the use of all the available local resources are needed to resolve the task of housing construction. I wish to say that this is one of the most important tasks of republican and local organs of power, of their economic organisations.

I hope that we shall delve deeper into this subject during our further deliberations and the Congress will issue a special assignment on this score to the Supreme Soviet and the government.

Comrades, social policy cannot be effective unless it responds to the interests of different sections of society. Our society is vitally interested in providing the best possible conditions for younger generations starting out on adult life so that they will have everything needed to bring out their creative capabilities, reveal the energies of youth and take an active part in the affairs of the state. A lot of problems have accumulated in this sphere.

You know that the Young Communist League Central Committee has drafted a law on youth and submitted it to the USSR Supreme Soviet as legislative initiative. But the problem, of course, cannot be reduced to the enactment of

any single law, even the best of them. The attention should be devoted everywhere to the training of the younger generation, to the creation of social and other conditions needed for their normal entering upon adult life. A lot of consistent work will be required in the field. We expect a constructive contribution of young Deputies and, of course, of all People's Deputies to the discussion of problems connected with a social policy with regard to the country's youth.

We are duty-bound to get down without delay to grappling with numerous sharp problems encountered by women. In this field, too, an integral system of measures is required that will include concern for motherhood, protection for working women and for women's health, and steps to ease the burden of household chores and daily routine. A lot of things were told to the electors on this subject during the electoral campaign, these problems were given much attention in the programmes of about all the Deputies. They should be examined most thoroughly and in detail, of course, with due account for our potentialities. All these are major issues. We cannot do without a comprehensive approach to them. We should not limit ourselves to settling just individual matters.

Obviously, the Supreme Soviet should have standing commissions to deal with all these issues in real earnest. Or it might be a committee, we should discuss it. On the whole, the structures should be created which could prepare serious proposals to the Supreme Soviet.

Our moral duty and obligation is to show constant concern for war and labour veterans, those who upheld the independence of our Motherland in the Great Patriotic War, who helped the national economy to its feet in difficult years and bolstered its industrial strength, to whom we owe everything that we enjoy.

People's Deputies include our elder Comrades who know veterans' aspirations and needs better than others. And we

should need their voice and fairly resolve issues posed by life

I would like to say the following, Comrades, in this connection. There are many common issues of daily life that must be solved by local, especially republican, agencies without any dilly-dallying or instructions from above. Much less without directives of the Congress of People's Deputies. Besides, special decisions were taken by government bodies on this score, binding officials to show concern for war veterans and retired workers and to tackle their urgent problems as a matter of priority.

I must say also that invalids and all participants of the Afghan war need a most considerate attitude.

Tackling problems of the nation's social and economic development, we should consistently realise the principle of social justice. It is not enough to proclaim it, it is essential to stimulate social and economic mechanisms to make it possible to remove the principal brake on our progress—levelled wages and the deeply-ingrained psychology of parasitism.

I have already had occasion at this Congress to touch upon the problem of social benefits and privileges. I will add the following to what I said then.

The system of privileges—be it differentiated pensions or vacations, medical services or housing, and the provision of material and cultural benefits to different social, age and professional groups, territories and agencies—has taken shape over many dozens of years. Apparently, these issues should be treated in such a way as, on the one hand, to stimulate talent and highly-efficient work and, on the other, to help those groups of the population that need it. Of course, any aberrations or abuses must be resolutely eradicated.

Hence it is suggested to entrust a special commission of the USSR Supreme Soviet to conduct a kind of audit on all

existing benefits and privileges on the basis of these criteria, and make relevant proposals

My first attempts to understand how this system of privileges was formed and what it is like brought about the need to thoroughly consider this problem

We can see, Comrades, how many problems have been accumulated in the social sphere. Requests and wishes for these or other needs to be met are being heard from all sides. Naturally enough, in answering them we have to weigh our real possibilities.

What should be considered in this connection? First of all, a redistribution of existing resources in the interest of resolving the most pressing problems.

Substantial resources can be freed by improving the state of things in the nation's investment pattern, by sharply reducing capital outlays for the building of production facilities. Different cuts are being suggested in this connection—from very moderate to tens of per cent. The first steps in this direction have already been made.

The newly-formed government should make its proposals on this score to the USSR Supreme Soviet. They could be carefully studied in commissions with the involvement of specialists, practical workers and experts and on this basis relevant changes could be made to the programme of capital construction.

We'll have to take difficult but necessary decisions, choose some options and abandon others.

But I would like to express the following judgement right now. We must unfailingly abide by the rule that the amount of capital construction match existing capabilities and material and manpower resources. Only in this case shall we be able to do away with the building fever as well as with the dictates and irresponsibility of construction agencies and organisations.

Another source of funds for social programmes is represented by cuts in military spending and by conversion involving the use of the robust potential of defence industries for civilian purposes

Reliable defences were and remain a vital issue for our people who have lived through a most arduous war, and the Soviet army has always been given special care

But in the present world there are increasing possibilities to ensure security by political and diplomatic means. This makes it possible to reduce military expenditures through giving a new quality to the Soviet armed forces without detriment to the country's defence capability

Over the past two years military spending was frozen. This helped save 10 billion roubles

Now I'd like to give the real figure for military spending in 1989—77.3 billion roubles. You are invited to consider a proposal for slashing the military budget for 1990-1991 by another 10 billion roubles, or by 14 per cent, and working further on all aspects of this issue at the Supreme Soviet, taking into account domestic requirements and the task of ensuring a reliable defence potential for the country

Outlays on space programmes have already been partially scaled down. These outlays are not that big. You will see it when working on this issue later on.

Further possibilities for cutting expenditures should be found. But it must be taken into account that thanks to newest space-related ideas we acquire unique technologies. Suffice it to say that newest developments produced as part of the Buran project alone can yield substantial returns, reaching a billion roubles, if given over to the national economy and for export.

Proposals to this effect have been presented in two volumes to the Defence Council and sent to dozens of

enterprises and economic organisations Only in this case will our space-exploration expenditures be justified

The use in the civilian sector of unique technologies evolved in defence industries holds great promise Conditions have been created today to put an end to unwarranted secrecy and abolish the "internal cocoon"

Quite a few possibilities for redistributing resources in favour of the social sphere lie in cuts in managerial expenses The new conditions of economic management make it possible to overhaul the administrative system

This issue also requires a thorough study in the Supreme Soviet and the reason why is that recent years have seen marked changes on the upper level of management (and further changes are in the making, as the government is going to report), while executive staff at local level, especially the level of amalgamations and factories themselves, has swelled even further rather than shrink

In other words, the economic independence is accompanied by the growth in the number of personnel There is a senior executive, specialist per six workers It means that someone gains from this

We spend some 40 billion roubles a year on the upkeep of the administrative apparatus in this country Significantly, 2.5 billion of these go to maintain state management bodies, whereas the rest is absorbed by the administrative staff of amalgamations and factories This issue must be made clear

There are also other possibilities to redistribute resources in the economy in the interest of resolving social problems I think, this part of the report will be supplemented by Deputies in the course of the discussion, the same as other considerations expressed in it All of them should be tapped But the main thing, of course, is to raise production efficiency, improve product quality and

put all production factors to better use through a fundamental streamlining of the national economy

We should be most clearly aware that we can solve priority social problems and lay the groundwork for the future only by expediting scientific and technological progress and ensuring the priority development of basic sciences and the evolution and introduction of advanced technologies

It should be likewise clear that wrenching the economy from the quagmire is unfeasible without the radical economic reform, the transfer of all economic units to complete cost-accounting and self-financing, and the extensive development of leaseholding and cooperative production arrangements. We are to develop a new economic model through the reform.

There are, let us say it bluntly, keen debates underway in society about the economic reform, its results and problems arising as it is implemented. Considering this, we at the Central Committee have analysed the progress of the economic reform most thoroughly. Quite a few meetings were held on these issues with economic scientists, managers, specialists and representatives of labour collectives. The general conclusion is that the strategic concept of reform and its guidelines are correct.

But as the reform is implemented in practice, there is a lot of inconsistency, indecision, half-heartedness, zigzagging and even backpedalling. Most importantly, we are showing undue slowness and great delay with developing and starting up the economic machinery.

In other words, we are late with creating the economic environment for the reform, the only environment in which it can gain in strength, gather momentum and bring the desired results. In fact, it is the absence of such economic mechanisms that is hampering the further progress of the reform.

In this situation there have emerged alternative opinions about the further fate of the reform. One can hear, for example, that many of our troubles in the economy have been spawned by new methods of management and that we should not hurry with the reform.

This attitude cannot be accepted. The view in the Central Committee and the government is that the turnpike of economic development lies through consistently unfolding the economic reform. We think it necessary to adjust our economic policies and practical activities on this basis.

Experience demonstrates that the reform cannot be effected at one fell swoop. Switching the economy over from one mode of operation to another is a complex matter. To cope with it successfully, it is essential to speed up the elaboration and fulfilment of a number of interrelated steps to consistently update planning methods, financial levers, prices, taxation, the pay system, and all other components of the economic mechanism. Much of this can be accomplished even before the 13th Five-Year-Plan period.

One more thing, Comrades. Life has demonstrated graphically that the economic reform is simply impossible without radically updating socialist property relations and developing and combining various forms of this property.

We favour the establishment of flexible and effective relations of using public property so that each form of property proves its vitality and right to exist in real and fair competition. The only condition that should be made is that there is no exploitation of workers and their alienation from the means of production.

Another decisive aspect of the economic reform—the creation of a full-blooded socialist market—is inextricably connected with this attitude to property. The market, of course, is not omnipotent. But mankind has not been able to devise a different, more effective and democratic

mechanism of economic management. A socialist plan-based economy cannot do without it. We should recognise this.

We believe that as the reform makes headway, we shall see the formation of such a system of relations in the economy as can be called a legal economy. It will be based on law-regulated relations rather than administrative injunctions and orders.

Government guidance over the economy and economic management will be clearly separated.

The key figures in the economy should be enterprises, concerns, joint-stock societies and cooperatives. In order to deal with common problems and coordinate efforts they will apparently take the path of forming voluntary alliances, unions and associations which will take over the economic management functions currently performed by ministries.

The justness of this approach is borne out by both our own experience and worldwide trends in economic development.

Such an approach does not mean belittling the role of the state if one, of course, does not confuse it with ministries and economic management with state guidance. The latter is freed from the functions of directly interfering in the day-to-day guidance of economic units and concentrates on developing a common normative framework and conditions for their activity. Its natural spheres will still be the key areas of scientific and technological progress, infrastructure, nature conservation, control over ensuring people's social protection, the financial system including tax instruments, economic legislation including laws against monopolisation and its negative consequences for society.

By adopting the laws on state enterprise (association) and on cooperation we made an important, but only the

first step towards such an economy. These laws themselves need to be perfected. A great amount of discussion is under way in society on this score. Many critical remarks are voiced over unequal conditions in which enterprises from various branches of the economy operate. In this connection scientists, economic managers and the broad mass of the working people—and I have told about this during my talks with Deputies—are posing with mounting insistence the question of elaborating single economic and legal underpinnings for the activity of enterprises. I think that this question has great significance and deserves greater attention from the Congress.

As you can see, Comrades, the problems of further developing and extending the reform will underline our further activities. It is obvious that the Supreme Soviet should have appropriate structures and mechanisms. There are serious grounds for creating in the government a special coordinating body to oversee the reform, headed by a Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.

II

We together can state with every foundation—and this has already been stated here—that the broad democratisation of state of public life of our country is the most substantial accomplishment of perestroika. The elections of people's Deputies of the USSR, the work of our Congress and the atmosphere of its deliberations convincingly attest to this.

From the beginning we framed the question in this way: any concepts of drastic renewal of society's life are doomed to failure if all segments of society, the entire people do not become from the outset involved in these processes, revolutionary in their content. We made this the basis of all our decisions, beginning with the April 1985 Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee, which received extended substantiation in the resolutions of the 19th Party Conference which identified the pursuit of radical

political reform and the building of a socialist, rule-of-law state as one strategic direction of perestroika

We can now move further, drawing on the immense potential released by implementing the tasks of the first stage of the reform I have in mind the convening of this Congress and the formation of the new supreme bodies of power

The specific programme of activity will take shape following the discussion of the entire set of issues here, at the Congress, and at the meetings of the Supreme Soviet, its chambers, newly formed committees and commissions. That is why I will dwell only on some of the issues which appear to me to be of principled importance in terms of further democratisation of our society

First of all this is the implementation of the historic slogan "Power to the Soviets" we have advanced again. The reconstruction of representative bodies, all-round widening of their rights and powers in accordance with the Constitution, the unconditional subjugation of the apparatus to them is the first prerequisite for the return of real levers of power and management to the Soviets. Many people here have already declared in favour of this, and we should register this in the final documents of our Congress

Another condition for this is a clear delimitation of the powers of Party and government bodies. The Party condemned decisively the state of things when its organisations were substituting government bodies and were actually performing the functions of direct management of the economy and all other areas of life. Assuming the tasks uncharacteristic of them, Party committees lost the ability to appraise critically the development of society and play the role of its vanguard

Making the initiative for perestroika and being its chief motive force the Communist Party is now the guarantor of this revolutionary process, and is protecting it against

encroachments of conservative and ultra-left elements. It is precisely the Communist Party that is capable of performing the role of the integrating force without which the renewal of socialism cannot be brought to a successful conclusion.

Restructuring on a profoundly democratic basis changes the role of the Party, its interaction with the state, with public organisations. The main thing for the Party *now is to* express and harmonise the interests of the main social groups, strata of the population, of the entire people, to consolidate the activity of all the links of the political system of society.

The Party proposes a dialogue and cooperation to all public organisations and movements, invites them to join actions for the restructuring and the renewal of society.

The central issue of the second stage of the political reform is the setting up of a new structure of bodies of power and administration in the republics, territories, regions, cities and districts. This requires above all making the necessary adjustments in the electoral system, based on the outcome and lessons of the election campaign held. This work must be embarked upon without delay, since, as I understand it, this was favoured by all who intervened in the debate here.

As a result we must get such an election law that would incorporate all the best elements ensured by the democratic character of the elections held and, of course, would do away with the shortcomings that have come to light.

There is another, no less important question. The new representative bodies must obtain not only full-fledged legal powers but also the real levers of power. And for this it is necessary that the Supreme Soviet gets down forthwith to preparing laws on republican cost-accounting and self-financing, on self-government and local economy. It

appears that the commissions and chambers must organise their work in a manner so that these important documents be prepared for discussion and adoption already by the time of the Second Congress of the People's Deputies

At issue are principled questions pertaining to the structure of the federal state, the rights and opportunities of the local Soviets, the broadening of the self-governing principles in the whole of our political system. I shall tell you frankly without the development and adoption of these laws the "All Power to the Soviets" slogan will be hanging in the air, will remain nothing but a slogan, an appeal. It is evident that at the present Congress the People's Deputies will have many things to say on this score. This will become a valuable contribution to the subsequent work on the documents.

It is in the context of such an approach that we have to decide the question of the dates for holding elections to the republican and local Soviets. You will recall that we intended to hold them next autumn. This, at least, is the assumption we proceeded from at the 19th Party Conference when discussing the questions of the coming political reform.

But it appears that we have not thought out everything and could not foresee everything. The actual processes of political reform lead us to the realisation that ensuring all the legal prerequisites for holding elections and their thorough preparation still require much work. The work must be started already now but evidently it is only in autumn, at the Second Congress that we shall be able to adopt laws concerning the republican and local Soviets.

I must say that Party and Soviet bodies are receiving proposals to hold the regular elections within the time span stipulated by the Constitution, i.e., next spring when the term of office of the present Soviets is to expire.

Both the first stage of the political reform and everything

that has to be done at its successive stages constitute progress along the road of creating a socialist rule-of-law state. It goes without saying, however, that this does not resolve the task of building such a state. The task is a much more vast one, encompassing a broad domain of democratic regulation of society's life.

Legal protection of the individual and ensuring all the conditions enabling the citizen to exercise all the rights and, naturally, to discharge his obligations vis-a-vis the state moves to the forefront here.

All over steps to build a rule-of-law state, and their effectiveness, must be measured by the main criterion—by what they give to the Soviet man.

You know how starkly the question posed itself before the voters during the elections about the dignity of the citizen and his legal protection. This in many respects is a consequence of past political practice based on the preeminence of state's interests over those of the people. Zealous concern for state interests not infrequently served to justify facts of arbitrariness, violation of the constitutional rights of the citizens and of the bureaucratic attitude to them. We resolutely reject this approach as incompatible with the general democratic and socialist values and ideals. The common good cannot be built on injustice committed even in respect of one person. Every citizen is responsible for his actions before society, but society and the state in turn are responsible before the citizen for ensurance of his legal rights, personal immunity and property.

All these are general principles, Comrades. Making them truly effective and part of our societal practice require adoption of a whole number of laws. Some of them are already being elaborated and may in the near future be tabled for discussion by the Supreme Soviet commissions. These are draft laws on freedom of conscience, the press, public organisations, youth and some others. We should

bring the criminal, civil, labour and family legislation in conformity with time, with new ideas and tasks. In other words, the rejuvenation of society should be based on the renewal of the legislation.

The need to renovate our legislation on human rights matters is also due to the fact that the Soviet Union has become party to the Vienna agreements, and so our present legal norms must correspond to the international covenants.

In short, the Supreme Soviet and then the Congress will have to work thoroughly to lay a durable legal basis for all aspects of societal life.

Someone has counted that we will have to work out 50 laws. This is true not only with respect to the status of the individual and civil relations but also the activity of the very bodies of power and administration, economic bodies, those of law enforcement, etc.

I wish, Comrades, to express my positive attitude to the opinions of Deputies who raised the need for the most important of laws to be submitted for a referendum, in addition to their nation-wide discussion which has become an accepted practice with us.

Judiciary and legal reform is a very important stage on the road to creating a socialist rule-of-law state. As you know, last autumn when additions were made to the Constitution, provisions on election of people's judges by higher Soviets of People's Deputies were included in it. This most important condition of the court's independence was, incidentally, the demand of the whole people.

But many important problems will have to be solved along these lines, and in the first place those of raising the level of cadres called upon to administer justice, to ensure the strictest legality, to keep public order. It is necessary to work out and implement a broad programme

of expanding legal education in the USSR, to look after the material basis for judiciary and investigating bodies and the material situation of those working in that sphere

Optimal solutions must be found to many issues that are now being raised in connection with the legal reform. They were also raised at the sessions of our Congress. I have in mind the possibility of introducing trial by jury, the procedure for investigation, control over the procedure and so on. All these must be discussed.

All this immense work on the judicial reform is necessary, of course, not *per se* but in the interests of strengthening law and order in the country. This task has assumed a special topicality in connection with the growing crime rate, including such dangerous manifestations as corruption, mafia racketeering and bribe-taking. Another urgent problem is that of combating hooliganism which disrupts the normal conditions for people's life, work and rest.

I think that the Deputies will concur with the need to strengthen law enforcement bodies, seeing to it that they adopt effective measures to eradicate crime.

Democracy can exist only with strict compliance by all—the state, public organisations, every collective and every citizen—with their rights and duties. This is axiomatic.

Neither can I omit mentioning what is now a matter of growing concern for our people. I have in mind the attempts by certain individuals and groups to further their personal or group objectives by organising mass disorders and provoking acts of violence. Such things are intolerable in a rule-of-law state. Legal objectives can and must be achieved by legal means and illegal goals must be suppressed. If we fail to protect democracy and openness, this may affect the destinies of the country and the people in the most dramatic way.

In short, we must counter all illegal acts not only by arguments of the mind, appeals to conscience, and public opinion, which must surely play the primary role, but also by the force of law Only in this way can democratic society live and develop

Our Congress cannot disregard the matter over which serious concern is mounting in society I mean the present state of discipline and order Frankly speaking, we are not satisfied with this It should be decisively changed for the better We have large economic and moral losses, above all in the sphere of labour, because of poor discipline and shoddy work

This has an extremely negative effect on our entire society Irresponsibility and disorder disorganise daily living, introduce unnecessary tension, simply speaking, annoy people And for some reason, it became almost a disgrace to pose the question of discipline, to demand order Some persons view such attempts, usually very timid, as all but the undermining of democracy, the striving to revive the command system, servile attitude in people

Surely with some people talk about discipline is none other than pining for the old times This, apparently, takes place, Comrades There is no denying that when some people talk about discipline they think about a strong hand, a return to the state of things when orders had to be fulfilled without discussion

But a different thing matters the most, Comrades We all feel where poor discipline leads, so we must assume a firm position at the Congress that without discipline, without order, perestroika will not make headway

Democratisation requires enhancing discipline on the basis of growth of social activity of people We must oppose negligence with lofty responsibility for the matter at hand and we must not be ashamed to demand discipline and order

III

Comrades, the first days of the Congress brought to light again the acuteness of nationalities question, the complexity of inter-ethnic relations. Indeed, multi-ethnic character is a unique quality of our state and society. On the one hand, it is a source of its strength, but on the other, given the slightest distortions of nationalities policy, it can become the cause of the weakening of the state, of instability in society with unpredictably heavy consequences.

Time has shown the correctness of nationalities policy worked out by Vladimir Lenin. Its results for our peoples are impossible to overestimate. Vast work has been carried out to overcome national oppression and inequality, to bring about the upsurge of the economy and develop culture of all the nations inhabiting the country. Interest in our experience was shown in the whole world, and this should in no case be forgotten.

But in the thirties Lenin's nationalities policy was grossly distorted and subjected to deformations. They were felt by virtually all peoples. There's no denying that a simplistic notion of the many-faceted character of national relations, encouragement of tendencies to unitarianism, negation of specific features of national development, political accusations of whole nations with the ensuing arbitrariness and lawlessness, impermissible equation of national feelings of people with manifestations of nationalism took place in our life.

Our legacy is very complex. And it should be noted that in the stagnation times negative processes in national relations were either ignored or driven inside, due to which they aggravated still more. They had to come to the surface sooner or later.

Democratisation and glasnost made it possible to see the whole truth and start rectifying distortions, eliminating injustice. But it should be admitted that at the beginning of the perestroika drive we have not realised in full measure the need to renew nationalities policy. Probably, there has

been a delay about solving a number of burning problems. Meanwhile, natural dissatisfaction with the accumulated economic and social problems came to be viewed as infringement of national interests. Speculating on these common difficulties, definite elements tried to aggravate the situation still more. This resulted in excesses in a number of republics and led to the generally-known tragic consequences with the loss of life.

Allow me to express from this rostrum our common grief over the death of innocent people. This should not happen again.

It is obvious that we are obliged to improve completely national relations, to rid them of everything that contradicts our morality and ideology, humane principles of socialism.

By renewal of nationalities policy we mean the need to bring it in keeping with the realities of the present. Economy, demography, the social and national structure of all republics have changed. National awareness enhanced. New needs arose in cultural life. Many facets of ethnic relations are viewed in a new light now.

It can be said that a political mechanism is being created now, which is called upon to ensure a reasonable and fair approach to matters of inter-ethnic relations, work out such decisions as would suit the interests of every Soviet nation and the interests of the whole people.

I mean the already published draft laws on these matters and vast preparatory work for a Plenum of the Central Committee devoted to them and, what is particularly important, the coming work of the Supreme Soviet and its commissions in whose framework national problems should be resolved in a comprehensive and thorough way.

The principle of national self-determination advanced by Lenin has been and remains one of chief elements of nationalities policy of the Communist Party. It was at the

basis of socialist statehood when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was formed

Recourse to history, economic calculations and political consciousness, common sense, peoples' experience all indicate the vital need for the development of all Soviet nations in the framework of a federal state. And perestroika is the weightiest argument in its favour. It creates the conditions for correcting any errors and deformations of the past, for achieving a real harmony of inter-ethnic relations, so that a person of any nationality should feel comfortable no matter where he or she was born, lives and works.

The federal structure of state should now be filled with real political and economic contents so that this form should fully meet the requirements and aspirations of nations and be in keeping with realities of the present.

On the whole, we view the key aspects of the restructuring of nationalities policies in the following way:

In the political area these are the substantial widening of the rights of union and autonomous republics, of other national formations, relegation of an ever broader range of managerial functions to local government, the enhancement of independence and responsibility of republican and local government bodies. There is a need for a firm definition in a federal state as to what is in the jurisdiction in the union and what is a sovereign right of a union or autonomous republic. There should be juridical mechanisms for settling conflicts that might arise in their relations.

In the economic area there is a need for harmonising relations between the union and republics on the basis of organically combining their economic independence and vigorous participation in the all-union division of labour. From this standpoint the country's national economic

complex should be restructured into the common process of the renewal of Soviet economy which would include the switching of republics, territories and regions to self-management and self-financing

It is of fundamental importance that the new approach to the development of the republic's economy and local self-management should not lead to an autarchy which looks as an anachronism in the world today, but should promote the deepening of cooperation which meets the interests of every republic and the whole country

Demographic and ecological problems are closely related to economic problems. All-union, republican and regional interests should be effectively combined in these areas, too

In the cultural area we proceed from the recognition of multi-formity of national cultures as a great social and historic value, unique property of our entire union. We have no right to underestimate, much less lose any of them, for each of them is unique

We favour a free, all-round development of every people, national language and culture, equal and friendly relations of all nations, peoples, groups of nationalities

The Congress of People's Deputies, the USSR Supreme Soviet must solve a large number of most complex problems in the area of inter-ethnic relations. And allow me to express the confidence that their profound analysis will enable us to enrich the Leninist nationalities policies as applicable to present-day realities of the Soviet multi-ethnic state and thus create a most reliable political basis for the country's further confident development

IV

Comrades, perestroika in the Soviet Union could not but influence our entire international activity, but it could not be implemented if our former foreign policy were preserved

A radical change of the foreign policy course is connected with new political thinking, which was developing as we were getting rid of dogmatic notions, of conclusions that were correct only for their own time but were not in keeping with realities of the present.

New thinking is a dynamic concept which continues to deepen and develop. And its main starting point is the conclusion of the 27th Congress of the Communist Party about the mortal danger of nuclear weapons and the arms race for humanity's existence, about wholeness and interdependence of the world today, the change of the nature of its contradictions and of the contents of the world process.

New thinking is based on the recognition of the primacy of human interests and values, generally accepted norms of morality as the indispensable criterion of any policy, freedom of socio-political choice precluding interference in the affairs of any state, the need for ideologisation of inter-state relations. Despite profound distinctions of the social systems, each of them now has objective opportunities for embarking on a fundamentally new, peaceful period in the history of humanity.

In the existing reality there are many facts which, it would seem, are not in the mainstream of new thinking. There exist forces of the past and contradictions inherited from the past. Therefore we cannot disband the army and bid farewell to arms. The same can be said of military alliances whose preservation depends not on us alone.

But no matter how much old forms and means are needed, they cannot be allowed to block new approaches to the construction of international relations. In this lies the wisdom of any big politics. This is the essential distinction of the foreign policy connected with the perestroika drive. We can uphold it now basing ourselves on actual results. Many things have already become

customary and seem nothing out of the way But where we would be now if everything remained as it had been?

International tension eased, and there is no direct threat of nuclear war, people from different countries as if looked each other straight in the face and realised the absurdity of animosity The reduction of nuclear arsenals has been started Europeans started to scale down military confrontation, the most dangerous in the world We have withdrawn troops from Afghanistan and started to withdraw them from allied countries The country has opened to outside world to assume a due place in the international division of labour and use its advantages Restrictions and prejudices that interfered with our effective participation in the solution of global problems, in scientific and cultural exchange have been removed

Our foreign policy is oriented towards the whole world But each specific case naturally has its own features and its own particularly important emphasis both bilateral and from the viewpoint of regional and international significance

This applies first of all to socialist countries Relationships with them reflect a very crucial stage in the development of the socialist world We came to feel this fully during the visit to our great neighbour, the People's Republic of China, the normalisation of relations with which is an event of world-wide significance

There can be and, indeed, are difficulties in shaping new types of relationships between socialist countries These are in the objective realities of the complex and contradictory process taking place in various countries But the difficulties are surmountable

Mutual respect, non-interference in the affairs of one another, friendly mutual understanding, a profound interest in the experience of one another, the need for

cooperation and readiness for joint patient work are the main conditions for this All these are manifest now

The participation in the building of a 'common European home' is the major direction of our foreign policy activities The basic ideas are known They have come into general use by the public and entered negotiating practice The principles of sound relations, in the spirit of perestroika, with all states participating in the Helsinki process have been laid down and are being increasingly applied

We shall undeviatingly continue to pursue the Vladivostok line in the Asia-Pacific region The diversity of tasks there is still greater Both an 'agenda' and tonality of relations with many countries have been determined well-wishing, constructive and respectful Like everywhere, there are countries in the region to relations with which we shall continue to give special attention The first among them is India

We all understand that Soviet-American relations are of paramount importance for world politics We are prepared to cooperate with the United States on a predictable and stable basis and are ready to make headway, combining continuity with new ideas

In recent years we have discovered possibilities for closer and more productive contacts with Latin America and Africa In this field, there are also both common problems and specificity in relations with individual countries

It remains our paramount concern to strengthen good-neighbourly relations with all contiguous countries

The Congress of People's Deputies is to consider and to legislatively endorse principles for our foreign policy course for the coming years I believe these must be as follows

— the country's security should be ensured first of all by political means, as a component of universal and equal security, in the process of demilitarisation, democratisation and humanisation of international relations, with reliance on the prestige and resources of the United Nations Organisation,

— nuclear weapons should be eliminated in the course of the negotiating process oriented towards disarmament and reduction of countries' defence potential to the point of reasonable sufficiency,

— the use of force or threat of force to attain any political, economic or other ends are inadmissible, respect for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity in relations with other countries are indispensable,

— dialogue and negotiations with an eye to the balance of interests, and not confrontation, should become the only way to resolve international issues and to settle conflicts

— we are in favour of making the Soviet economy part of the world economy on a mutually-beneficial and equitable basis, and in favour of active participation in the formulation and observance of the rules of the present-day international division of labour, scientific and technological exchanges, trade, and cooperation with all those who are ready for it

And another matter of principle

Our foreign policy practice in the past in some cases ran counter to the lofty principles of socialist foreign policy we proclaimed. Arbitrary actions were taken which caused a considerable damage to the country and had a negative effect on its international prestige. It was the consequence of the selfsame command system and making decisions in camera characteristic of it.

One of the important tasks of the political system we are

reconstructing is to rule out such ways and methods. From now on all important foreign policy decisions should be taken after being thoroughly discussed in the Supreme Soviet and its commissions. And the most important of them, for instance, those connected with allied relations, with conclusion of important treaties should be submitted for the discussion of the Congress of People's Deputies.

An endorsement of the above-mentioned principles by the Congress of USSR People's Deputies is not simply of legal importance but also of immense political significance, both internationally and domestically.

By no means everyone in the West believes that our new course is a permanent choice and that we do not intend to change it. Neither does everyone in this country still realise the fundamental essence of foreign policy based on new thinking. Some people regard it as a kind of tactic, a temporary zigzag or even as concessions to the West.

Therefore I want to emphasise the hope that the Congress will support the following statement: this is our profoundly substantiated strategic line which expresses the interests of the Soviet people and meets, we are confident, the interests of the whole of mankind.

The proposal to send a message to peoples of the world from our Congress was expressed at the Congress here.

I think we have much to say to the peoples of the world.

V

Comrade Deputies,

As you see, we have an immense field of activity. We are to resolve a multitude of major revolutionary tasks in all fields—in socio-economic policy, state-legal, ethnic and international. There are many more problems that have even been mentioned in the report and I am sure the debate of the Congress will show this. It is quite understandable that success to a decisive extent depends on how well we shall

manage to organise our activities and how soon the new supreme bodies of power will begin to perform their proper functions and lead all reorganisational work in the country

A discussion on the subject has already actually begun, with some key issues, on which we should take counsel, coming to the fore. The first of them is the separation of functions between the Congress and USSR Supreme Soviet. This is a no easy matter because the structure of supreme power bodies being introduced in this country is based on a striving to organically combine our Soviet tradition, born of the socialist revolution, with the universally recognised experience of the work of representative bodies in the world.

To begin with, the Congress itself is a unique body in our system. This is precisely a Congress and it is not meant to work permanently. It should meet, as we agreed, at least twice a year to adopt the most important laws, decide on cardinal issues of the country's domestic and foreign policy, to evaluate and monitor the work of other bodies of power and if necessary introduce amendments to the Constitution or change the political system itself.

The Supreme Soviet in its new form should, as the political reform envisages, be a permanently functioning body of power performing both legislative and main administrative functions.

A few words about the correlation between legislative and executive authority. This is a very important issue. It requires special elaboration and study. But it can already be said that relationships between the chambers, commissions and committees of the Supreme Soviet on the one hand and executive bodies on the other should be fundamentally changed as compared with what was previously the case.

It is obvious that Supreme Soviet commissions and

committees should consider state plan targets and state budget items and judge whether they correspond to the basic guidelines of the Congress of People's Deputies and of the Supreme Soviet itself

Another important task to be tackled by commissions is to consider candidacies for key state posts, ministerial, ambassadorial, etc. It is not difficult to see that both functions enable our parliament to keep in its hands the real levers of power

Monitoring the activities of the government in matters of strategic importance, the Congress and the Supreme Soviet should see to it that the government could fully tackle the tasks of state administration within the framework of the Constitution, and assume full responsibility

As envisaged by the reform, an important role in our political system should be played by a committee for constitutional compliance which should act, in point of fact, as a constitutional court. I believe that the development of judicial control over the activities of administrative bodies at all levels should become one of the integral elements of the socialist rule-of-law statehood

During recent days the Congress has actively discussed the question of the status of a USSR People's Deputy. We all agreed that it was essential to work out a new document defining the status of the Deputy, his rights and duties and to submit it to the Congress

But there are some fundamental aspects which we should decide upon now so that all Comrades could join in active work. What should one bear in mind in this respect?

To begin with, the equality of all Deputies. All Deputies have equal rights irrespective of whether they were elected by territorial, national territorial districts or public organisations

Another aspect concerns the distribution of work

among Deputies themselves. It is only natural that those Deputies whom the Congress elected to the Supreme Soviet will have an additional work load and that they should have appropriate additional possibilities for the performance of duties entrusted to them.

The vesting of Supreme Soviet members with special functions should in no way mean belittling the role of the other People's Deputies. Each of them has the chance to be elected to the Supreme Soviet during the annual renewal of one-fifth of it.

Many Deputies will be included in the Supreme Soviet committees and commissions, making up half of their members and having the right to vote. It appears reasonable that they may be invited to fill leading positions in commissions and committees as, say, Deputy Chairman, representing this half.

As I see it, we all agreed that every People's Deputy of the USSR may participate in the work of this or that commission or committee and in sessions of the chambers of the Supreme Soviet if he so wishes. And each of them should get full information on the current work of the Supreme Soviet, the government or other bodies of power.

And finally, each of them has an opportunity to engage in active political work in his own region or public organisation, maintaining permanent contact with his constituents and sending this or that inquiry or suggestions to local and central authorities. Local bodies should see to it that the Deputies have the opportunity to receive citizens and meet constituents. All these issues must be tackled immediately.

Thereby we shall succeed in maintaining the most valuable quality of the Soviet system—the permanent link between the people's representatives and their constituents or, quoting Lenin, to combine the benefits of parliamentarism with those of direct democracy.

A few words about arrangements for organising the work of the Congress and the Supreme Soviet. The People's Deputies have brought to the Kremlin a diversity of views and experience, behind which are various interests—social, ethnic, professional, generational, and regional.

Natural divergences of opinion, arguments and discussions cannot be avoided in joint work. Such discussions began from the very first day if not the very first hour of the Congress, and I do not see anything bad about it. On the contrary, the pluralism of opinions broadens the range of possible decisions and makes it possible to get a much fuller idea of the subject under consideration.

And, of course, divergence of opinions should not become an obstacle to the adoption of reasonable decisions.

As one of the Comrades here has aptly put it, there can be many opinions but only one policy, the policy of revolutionary restructuring. Therefore it is necessary to do everything to reach accord, to do one's best to understand one another and to make some mutual concessions in the interests of work. Only when one fails to do that does the final say naturally rest with the majority. Such is the law of democracy.

Here is yet another important aspect which was also mentioned here. Deputies in different connection suggested introducing this or that change to the Soviet Constitution. I join those who cautioned against a hasty adjustment of the fundamental law.

The Constitution is too important a political document for its text to be geared to meet this or that new situation.

However, we are unanimous—or at least this is how I've understood the sentiments of the Congress—that there is a

need to elaborate and adopt a new Constitution of the country Sealing in a new Constitution the revolutionary transformations being effected during perestroika will be one of major guarantees of their irreversibility But at present, at the height of reforms, we have no possibility yet to take into account the entire spectrum of matters which must find reflection in a new fundamental law

Such are, briefly, the evaluations of the state of affairs in the country and considerations concerning the main directions of our country's domestic and foreign policy for the future

I would like to say in conclusion that we are beginning our work not from scratch We have developed a concept of perestroika and of economic and political reforms These matters were considered in this or that form and with this or that degree of depth and criticism at various forums of Party, state and public bodies and discussed in work collectives and the media Certain practical steps have also been made

But time quickly changes the situation and new tasks and new requirements emerge I would like to voice confidence that our Congress expressing the collective wisdom of the people will succeed in working out an effective programme for the activities of the Soviet state in the coming years and will give an impetus to the entire process of our revolutionary renewal

—TASS

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Printed by V.M. ASHITKOV at Allied Publishers Limited,
New Delhi and published by him for the Information
Department of USSR Embassy in India at
25, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi-1 Phone 3315370

